

# LOOKING BACK AT THE 2012 QUINQUENNIAL CONGRESS

## WHY FRANCIS? CLAIM THE GIFT

*“Francis, build up my house which is in ruin.”*

*by Sandra Kisel, OFS, Mother Cabrini Region*



What makes Francis so lovable and identifiable is his humanness; he is a creature of God like all of us! Yet God called him to build up his house, both within himself and around him. Francis didn't have all the answers to God's will any more than any of us; Francis' prayer before the crucifix exemplifies Francis's self-emptying prayers before God for help so

he could do God's will and live in the will of God in whatever God asked of him in spite of his weakness and fragility. Looking at our own selves as in a mirror...what do we see? We need to “embrace our own humanness/our identity and experience that which makes us most like Christ.” Only by embracing our humanness, weaknesses and frailty, can we follow in the footprints of Christ, so we look at Jesus not only on the Cross but throughout His whole life!

Sr. Ilia said we are called to contemplate Christ as the image of the God we cannot see. *We're called to focus on the whole Gospel*, Christ's life with all its ups and downs, twists and turns. The Franciscan focus is on Christ rather than self; and letting go of controls and all things that hold us back, such as fear, anxiety and suffering or animosity, or what happened yesterday or what might happen tomorrow! All these keep us from the love of Christ, *“I AM the Sculptor, you are the clay, be silent*

*earth and obey, so I may do with you as I may.”* We grow in our need for God and desire Him, recognizing how helpless we are without Him. In the *Office of the Passion*, Francis contemplated hourly all that was written of Jesus. He knew Holy Scripture and intimately united his life with Christ until, with Christ, he finally became the image of the one he loved.

Creation sings of the beauty of God within it; the mystery of the Incarnation tells the story of God's love; God wants an intimate/loving relationship with His creation, to walk with us. Franciscan Gospel life turns us from the old way of seeing things to seeing all things new through God's love, mind and perspective; through His presence within us, changing us from our self-centeredness toward God-centeredness; i.e., what does God want? What will make Him happy? Just as every flower and tree is unique, so is every creature. All have been created in the mind of God from all eternity. We are reminded that it's not what we do, but BEing who and what God has created us to be in this time and place, for Him, living in Him and He in us, being the best we can be, sharers in his Divine life for the life of the world: this is what He wants. Francis changed the times he lived in by living the Gospel in all its dimensions day to day with, in and through Christ. We're called to carry Christ into the world, to make God alive to all. We are brothers and sisters of all creation, children through Christ of the Father, mothers of Christ the Son, spouses of the Holy Spirit! Francis, through intimate union and self-emptying love, understood the gift of the Father...**God is not somewhere out there but dwells in us!**

## WHO ARE YOU, O LORD? A FRANCISCAN VIEW OF GOD

*by Mary Ann Sullivan, OFS, St. Clare Region*

Sr. Ilia gave an inspired Franciscan interpretation of God's love alive and present in us and everywhere around us. As Franciscans, we are called to recognize the risen Christ in all of nature. Our lives are to be a vivid display for the whole universe, that they shall see it is no

accident that our God, who is love and is pregnant with love, has called us to be love!



## CLAIM THE GIFT!

*by Dorothy Ann Roland, OFS, Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region*

Each of us has been called by the Holy Spirit to our vocation in the Secular Franciscan Order. Anne Mulqueen stated that “things change when the Holy Spirit is involved.” Think back to your own profession – remember the excitement, the fervor, the desires that were so strong as we said “Yes, this is what I want.” For some of you, your profession was recent; for others, a few too many years ago.

Let us claim the gift of our vocation again and again! With each breath of every day; with each step forward in our Franciscan journey, let us fan the flames of our gifts our heavenly Father has given to us. Don't be afraid! He sustains us and will provide us with what we need for our mission here on earth. We are parts of each other; there is only God at work to make us whole.



We are Christ in the world today. Be open to change and conversion. Listen for how you are being called now to do God's work. Remember from your profession to the Gospel Life that “your membership in your fraternity is a cause of great joy and hope for your community and for the whole Church.” Remember too that “our seraphic father Francis encourages you in the words of his Testament: ‘May whoever observes all this be filled in Heaven with the blessing of the Most High Father, and on earth with that of His Beloved Son, together with the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, and all the powers of heaven.’”

So let us take our vocation more seriously; let us rebuild, reform, and renew ourselves and our fraternities! Let each of us “Claim the Gift”!

## THE RULE OF THE OFS AND PRESENCE IN THE WORLD

*By Charles Lieser, OFS, Los Tres Compañeros Region*

Pat Brandwein-Ball's hobby of gardening has become part of her Franciscan vocation and informs her understanding of the Rule and the Order. Pat's “heirloom garden” with Amish paste tomatoes, Reisentaub tomatoes, black beans, squash and Cherokee Trail of Tears roses reminds her of the variety and character of her cherished Franciscan Order. Pat used the garden analogy to illustrate the first part of our Rule, which teaches and informs us who we are and what we are to become. “We are not to imitate Francis' actions and dress but take Francis as an imitation of Christ into our hearts, then into the world, to make a difference as we live out our Franciscan vocation in the world.

Pat reminds us that our Franciscan vocation should inform, animate and permeate our apostolates, our daily life, our very existence as human beings and everything with which we come in contact. She then departed from her slides and prepared remarks with a Franciscan call to action.

- Do not let God down!
- Do not let your Franciscan brothers and sisters down!
- Make holiness part of our being and part of everything we do!
- Change toward God!
- Be energized!
- Become the person we are called by God to be!
- Conversion!
- Prayer!
- Meditation
- Turn off the gadgets, turn on the people!
- Pray with eyes open and see the world around you!
- See the pain, see with your heart. Soften others' hearts!
- Answer God's call!

This is what the Rule is about. Along the way we need to be evangelized before we can evangelize.

Finally, Pat called us to answer these questions:

- Why are we here?
- Where are we going?
- What is God's call?

Look at it! Study it! Pray for it!

## REFLECTION ON THE HOMILY OF FR. STEVE GROSS, OFM CONV., CNSA

*by Dianne Prior, OFS, Blessed Junipero Serra Region*

Fr. Steve Gross, OFM Conv., was the presider at the Thursday morning Mass. As always, his style with humor challenged us as Franciscans to live the Gospel. Please note that the following is what I heard; it's not necessarily exactly what Fr. Steve said.

As Franciscans, you are called to an intensification, a more authentic manifestation, of a Catholic-Christian life. Your fraternity should be calling you to conversion, not telling you what you want to hear. Why did you come to the "Q"? To be entertained? To look the part? To look good? You are capable of so much more!

Experience a renewed heart...experience a renewed mind... then your bodies will be anxious to put that into action. Who are you becoming in God's name? You are God's creation and carry Christ in you. Respect who you are. Always be aware of your dignity.

Just after communion, Fr. Steve, motioning to the now empty vessels upon the altar, shared this inspiring message: "These sacred vessels have accomplished their purpose; now we are the vessels who hold the Lord within; to carry the Lord to the world."

## DEEPENING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, TOOLS FOR A MORE AUTHENTIC SPIRITUAL LIFE

*By Beth Freistroffer, OFS, Our Lady of Indiana Region*

*Perichoresis.* This is the big word that stood out for me during Ed Shirley's very entertaining presentation. Never heard of it before. *Perichoresis.* The relationship of the Triune God, mutual indwelling without loss of personal identity. The Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are inseparable and cannot act apart from one another, as Ed describes it, "dancing through and around each other."

What is this for me? It is a better understanding of the workings of the Holy Trinity in

relationship to my life. I am one with God the Father, one with the Son, and Holy Spirit. I am one with creation and every person on earth. Through apostolic action and prayer I act in the world and the world acts upon me, all with my very special uniqueness... I matter to God!

With this in mind, I should be able to let God "be" within me, loving everyone and all of creation. Wow! This is a daily conversion, and I thank God for the gift of my Franciscan spirituality to help me along this process.

## REFLECTION ON THE HOMILY OF FR. LESTER BACH, OFM CAP., CNSA

*By Marietta M. Advincula, OSF, La Verna Region*

Jesus said to Matthew, "Follow me." The Pharisees asked his disciples why Jesus ate with the tax collectors and sinners. Jesus said, "Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do... I desire mercy, not sacrifice. I did not come to call the righteous but sinners." Fr. Lester reminded us as Franciscans to identify with the merciful face of Christ. He gave three scenarios in the house of Matthew to challenge us how to respond as merciful Franciscans.

First, Matthew seats us by a gay person and his partner. Second, we are seated by an atheist, and third, we find ourselves seated with the Sadducees, who do not believe in resurrection. These scenarios could indeed create a wall in our

communication. However, as Franciscans, we need to build a door to enter through the wall to find compassion, love and respect for those who think and act differently from us. Another image Fr. Lester provided, to help create conversion, is for Franciscans to be bridge builders. These doors and bridges will heal the sick and the sinners, as Jesus tells us in the Gospel. The doors and bridges are instruments for us to dialogue and better understand each other, although we may disagree. Fr. Lester calls us to be open to people regardless who we are and open the door, our heart, to everybody in respect to the human being created by God.

Finally, he told of the story of Jacob the Baker, who feared he would lose part of himself if he got married. The good shepherd told Jacob that if he married someone, he would not lose part of

himself but would no longer be lost in himself. Jesus tells us to learn the meaning of the words, listen to the Gospel.

## DEEPENING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

*Mary Lou Kreider, OFS*

Ed Shirley, our own theologian, shared some very insightful thoughts on building our relationship with God. Perhaps the keyword is “Relationship. Ed demonstrated *haecceitas*, “thisness,” “Edness,” as he opened his talk playing “Ode to Joy” on his harmonica. What a fitting song for Franciscans!

Ed explained the Franciscan view of the Trinity, using the word *Perichoresis* to describe the intense relationship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as one of mutual indwelling, abiding in each other eternally. The Father is the source, fountain fullness expression of love and creativity, which extends to the Son, who is the Word, the expression, the exemplar, returning to the Father, culminating in the Holy Spirit. All this manifests itself in the constant dance of love, *perichoresis*, the unending circle.

Secular Franciscans are invited into the dance with our own Rule of 1978. Franciscan life has

three phases, prayer, contemplation and transformation. Prayer leads us to see the world, “pregnant with Christ.” Contemplation stirs deeper prayer of wonder and awe, which leads us to transformation and action, which brings us back to prayer.

*Perichoresis!!* We have much to help us in our life dance: liturgical cycles, liturgy of the hours, scripture and especially Liturgy, where a sacred moment transforms us into the “Body of Christ,” and the dance continues into the world. We are the very footprints (*vestigis*) of God.

The words, universal kinship, universal priesthood, holistic, *metanoia*, justice, peace, ecology and family take on a new life of Franciscan vocation! The Circle of LOVE!

*Perichoresis!!*

Thank you, Ed!!

## THE RULE OF THE SFO AND PRESENCE IN THE WORLD

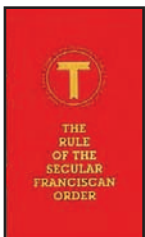
*Carol Gentile, OFS*

On July 7, 2012, at the Eighteenth Quinquennial Congress, Pat Brandwein-Ball gave a presentation on **THE RULE OF THE SFO AND PRESENCE IN WORLD**. Pat began her presentation by sharing her dream to start a *community garden* and that dream came true. Pat’s garden includes diverse vegetables from different parts of the country that she shares with others. What does the diversity of her garden have to do with the Rule of the SFO and Presence in the World? “Plenty!” she exclaimed. We Franciscans are as diverse in appearance and gifts as the vegetables in her garden. She then took a moment to gaze out from the podium and said: “From up here the room is aglow because I see in your eyes the light of God.”

Pat reminded us that the first portion of our Rule speaks about who we are as Secular Franciscans and that God calls us to holiness. The

second portion of our Rule, which encompasses justice, peace and the integrity of creation, challenges us to actively live our presence in the world. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us that life in Christ includes the social teachings of the Church. “Therefore,” Pat said, “we are responsible for incorporating these articles of the Rule into our daily lives as prayer, action and as a formation tool.”

As Pat continued her presentation, she mentioned that in 1978 we had no General Constitutions to explain who we are. But today, we have, in addition to the Rule, General Constitutions, National Statutes and the *For Up to Now (FUN) Manual*. Pat continued by saying, “Just having these documents doesn’t make us Franciscan. We must study them and pray them.” When we think of our presence in the world, we must dig deep inside ourselves and decide who we are and what we are called to do. Being a Franciscan includes



every part of our lives, both inside and outside. It is at the core of our being.

The challenge Pat presented was: How do we get to this point in our lives? We are called to be Holy—we are called to be saints. We need to look at our personal lives and ask ourselves, “What do I need to do to change?” “How can I get energized again?” Pat claims, “We need to unclutter our lives and turn off our electronic devices, so that we can pray with our eyes open and see others with our hearts!” Pat said,

*God has something special for us to do! There is a reason we were created. We need to rework and integrate new information and rework the clay and renew the pot.*

Pat then read an excerpt from the Congress program, written by the 2012 Quinquennial Planning Committee, entitled *Why Francis? Claim the Gift!*

*Brother Masseo . . . wanted to see how humble (Francis) was. He said to Saint Francis: “Why you? Why you?” Saint Francis replied: “What does Brother Masseo mean?” “The whole world seems to be coming after you and everyone is seeking to see you, to hear you, and to obey you: You are not a handsome man; you are not a man of great knowledge or wisdom; you are not of noble birth! Why does the whole world come to you?”*

Why do we follow Francis? What does the life and example of Francis have to say to us in the 21st Century? Why is the Spirit pointing us to him? Why do YOU follow Francis? Let our hearts burn within us as we listen to our brothers and sisters, opening our hearts to see in one another the reflection of the face of our Beloved Lord and hear His Voice.

The second part of the theme, *Claim the Gift*, refers to the gift of our vocation. God has been preparing us, there is no doubt, to *put out into the deep*, quoting from Pope John Paul II’s address to the General Chapter in 2002, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*. This call to claim our gift has been building

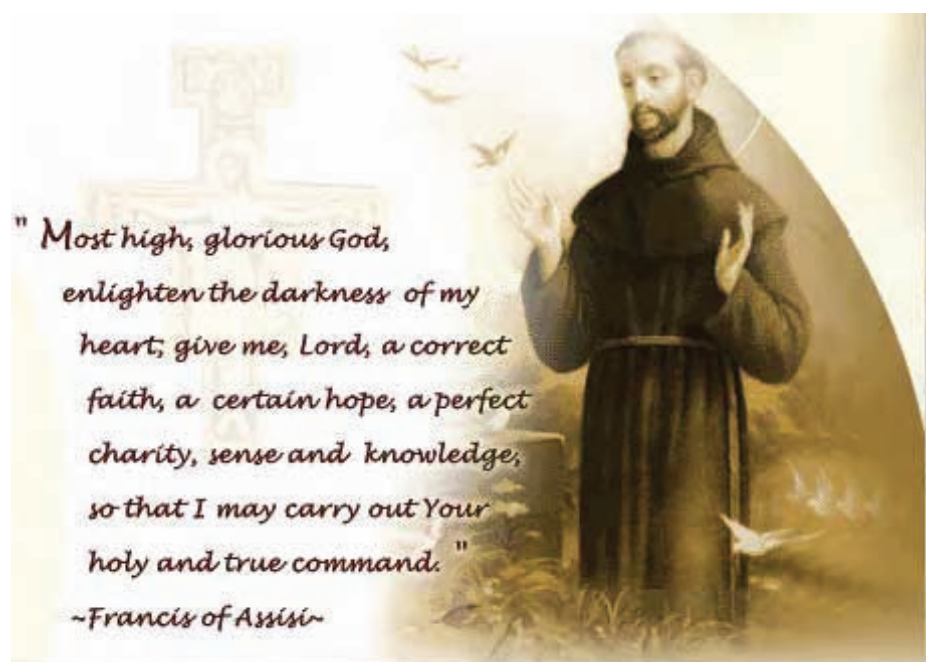
through previous Quinquennials focused on the themes of *Refounding, The Time is Now, the Kingdom is at Hand, Called to Build a More Fraternal and Evangelical Word: Many Cultures, Through Francis, In Christ*. It has been building through the CIOFS General Chapters calling for better and more thorough formation, developing a *Sense of Identity and Belonging to the Order*, and *Evangelized to Evangelize*.

We want to hear again the Spirit’s call in our hearts, offering us again consecration to the Gospel life of joyful and loving service to God through His Church and to His people. What does that vocation look like in 2012 and beyond? What IS God asking of the Secular Franciscans of the United States in this Third Millennium? Pat’s challenge: “Take some time to REFOCUS! Why are you here? Where is God calling us?”

Pat concluded by offering us a challenge to *start the journey*. Quoting from the book, *Pathways to Re-creating Religious Communities* she said, “Just start the Journey. You can expect failures; just begin again.”

**Trust in the Holy Spirit to move us and guide us on our journey.**

□ The acronym “SFO” is no longer used. As of October 2011, “OFS” is the official acronym for the Secular Franciscan Order.



## Reunion & Affirmation

*By Margarita Rodriguez OFS, Councilor, St. Francis Region*



There are two words that come to mind in describing the 2012 Quinquennial (The “Q”) “Reunion” and “Affirmation”.

The “Q” was like a family reunion. I felt this throughout the entire week.

Brother Bill Short gave us a beautiful history lesson on the Order, putting our OFS in context of that history. He began by saying that we are an “interactive” family. What one branch does affects the other branches.

Although the majority of us were OFS, we had brothers and sisters from the other branches: the First, Second and Third Orders of our Church. However, Franciscan brothers and sisters outside the Catholic Church were also present. I had the pleasure of having a Franciscan sister who was a deacon in her denomination as one of my “Q” fraternity members.

The “Q” fraternities were formed so we could have a smaller fraternity experience in which to share the topics and questions after our talks. You know that as Franciscans we were able to bond with our “Q” fraternity in a very short amount of time, and it gave us an opportunity to get to know some new family members a little better. I know that if God enables me to attend the next “Q,” I will recognize them there and hopefully remember their names.

The other aspect of the “Q” that affected me was the affirmation I felt our Region received through the week in the topics and talks.

Certainly the talks given by Sr. Ilia Delio and Brother Bill Short were alone worth the trip. However, I was impressed by the affirmation that I felt seeing that our own St. Francis Region is not too far off the mark in getting our formation act together. All the talks had elements of topics we have already approached and addressed in our own Region as important details and aspects of formation that we need. The fact that about 38 people from our Region were present is a testament to that understanding of who we are and especially where we are in the family constellation that is the Family of Francis.

The icing on the cake was sharing that week with our International Minister, Encarnación del Pozo, OFS, Minister General, Doug Clorey, OFS, Vice Minister General, Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR, General Assistant of the OFS-YouFra.

Being able to meet and talk to our international minister was a special blessing for many of us who had the chance to do so. This was truly a Family Reunion that I thank God that I was able to experience.

Many times throughout the week I prayed for all of us in the Region, missing you and praying that we would be able to bring back a little piece of the joy we experienced. We may never be able to gather so many of us together at one time until we gather with our Lord and Father Francis himself, but I think we had a little glimpse of what a fraternity gathering in heaven will be like.

## Our “Q” Experience

*By Mary Nelson, OFS, Canticles of the Son Fraternity & Pat Trimble, OFS, St. Bonaventure Fraternity*

What joy to spend five days with 600 plus of our closest Franciscan friends!! The eighteenth Quinquennial of the National Fraternity of Secular Franciscans celebrating the Franciscan family was held in Chicago, Ill., on July 3 to 8, 2012. Also

representing the Lady Poverty Region were Cyl Maljan, Mary Lou Kreider and Carol Gentile.

The principal speaker was Franciscan Sister Ilia Delio, OSF, acclaimed author and teacher. Sr. Ilia’s three presentations held the audience spell-

bound and deeply moved and can be described as scholarly and simple, universal and individually applicable, humorous and thought-provoking. Her talks were entitled “Why Francis? Claim the Gift!” “Who are you, O Lord?” and “What am I?” as she challenged us to think about our relatedness to each other and to creation. (All the presentations are available on a set of 4 DVDs in about two months.)

Ed Shirley, OFS, a professor of Religious and Theological Studies, taught us the meaning of the word, “*perichoresis*” with a humorous explanation of the nature of the Trinity as it intertwines with all of creation.

Br. Bill Short, OFM, teacher, author and speaker, presented a fascinating history of the relationship of all three Franciscan Orders over the 800 years since the time of St. Francis. Br. Bill noted that Franciscans are “pre-Pentecostal,” that is, we study and live the gospel life of Jesus which preceded the *Acts of the Apostles*. This history lesson is available online at [www.Quinquennial.org](http://www.Quinquennial.org) for your edification.

Pat Brandwein-Ball, OFS, the final speaker, has served in elected leadership in our Order since 1992. In her inspiring talk, she challenged us to “just do it.” She recommended that we review the Constitutions and specifically study the section on the Life of Christ in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

After each featured presentation the whole group split into “Q fraternities” of about six to ten persons each, where we met and discussed the “lesson learned and enlightenment gained.”

Liturgy of the Mass was celebrated each day with a different celebrant. We were welcomed by Auxiliary Bishop, Archdiocese of Chicago, George Rassas on Tuesday, followed by our own Fr. Kevin Queally, TOR, Fr. Stephen Gross, OFM Conv., and Fr. Lester Bach, OFM /Cap., all National Spiritual Assistants to our Order. Fr. Lester was recognized as a friend and advocate of OFS with more than 40 years of service. To hear the soaring thunder of 600 voices raised in prayer and praise and song was memorable.

A stellar evening concert was a highlight as we listened to Fr. Robert Hutmacher, OFM, play the harp and the grand piano (although not simultaneously!). To our delight, he performed 13th century-inspired pieces, which he had composed and dedicated to Lady Clare, on the harp. Fr. Bob changed the tempo from hymns to ragtime for our surprised enjoyment as he went from harp to piano and back. His performing arts ministry is called “*Chiesa Nuova*” and you can purchase it on the Web.

There were many opportunities each day to converse and share with the really important leaders of our Order, who made themselves “present” to everyone. We met Doug Clorey, OFS, from Canada (Vice Minister General of CIOFS) on the bus to the hotel, shared an elevator with Sr. Ilia and later had her autograph her book for us, broke bread with NAFRA Minister Tom Bello; Anne Mulqueen; Patrick Mendes; Patrick Carolan, Executive Director of Franciscan Action Network; Rob Breen, who works with YouFra in Blessed Kateri Region; the International Minister General, Encarnación del Pozo, OFS (who does not speak English and we do not speak Spanish, so a smile went a long way!); Fr. Armando Trujillo-Cano TOR, of CIOFS’ Conference of General Spiritual Assistants, and many TORs (both friars and sisters), Capuchins, Conventuals, and OFMs, a couple of Poor Clare sisters, spiritual assistants including many lay spiritual assistants, formation directors, from across the country and just plain seculars like us.

Unfortunately we had to leave the conference a day early on Saturday so we missed some of the closing sessions, reports and farewells. Nevertheless we felt we had made hundreds of contacts with our Franciscan brothers and sisters, shared smiles and hugs, addresses and information, ideas and faith experiences, connected with mutual friends and promised future exchanges. And perhaps this is the most amazing of all the benefits we gained at the Q, that is, to have made a difference, an impact, a good impression, a warm feeling of inclusion by becoming a closer, more involved and loving family of Franciscans.